(c) if so, whether the contract has been awarded to BHEL; and

(d) if not, the reasons therefore?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF HEAVY INDUSTRIES AND PUBLIC ENTERPRISES (SHRI SONTOSH MOHAN DEV): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) Yes, Sir.

(c) and (d) An independent Expert Committee under Chairperson, Central Electricity Authority (CEA) has been appointed to enquire into the matter and the report of the Committee is awaited.

Vocational courses to Bachelor Degree students

2031. SHRI S.M. LALJAN BASHA: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the University Grants Commission has suggested to diverse educational institutions by offering vocational courses to Bachelor Degree students;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the specific steps taken by the UGC to go beyond issuing advisories and circulars on this matter;

(d) whether any financial incentives have been offered to the colleges who have introduced vocational courses alongwith their degree programmes; and

(e) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI M.A.A. FATMI): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. The University Grants Commission has introduced a flexible system of certificate/diploma/ advance diploma programme, which will run parallel to the conventional B.A., B.Com., and B.Sc., degrees. The universities/colleges are, however, free to identify their own 'Need Based' career oriented courses.

(c) to (e) The UGC invities proposals from the colleges through advertisements in the national dailies throughout the country. The guidelines of the scheme, various courses offered, list of the selected colleges and application format are available on the UGC's website. The UGC had organized Seminars on 'Vocationalisation of Higher Education' to popularise the above scheme and enlarge awareness in the remote areas.

The UGC also provides a one-time 'Seed Money' of Rs. 5.00 lakhs, to the select colleges in the humanities and Commerce stream and of Rs. 7.00 lakhs in Science streams.

Special package for SC/ST children

2032. SHRI VIJAY J. DARDA: Will the Minister of HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the NCERT has discussed the problems of SC/ST children for attaining social justice in education, especially to control their higher dropout rate;

(b) if so, whether the Tata Institute of Social Sciences' National Curriculum Framework is considering the educational realities of SC/ST children; and

(c) if so, whether a similar study is also being conducted pertaining to tribal children or any special package is being prepared for them?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT (SHRI M.A.A. FATMI): (a) to (c) The central focus in the educational development of Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in their equalization with the non-Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes population in all stages and levels of education. The National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT) has conducted several State specific studies, covering factors which hamper their retention in schools, identification of attitudinal issues among teachers, curricular practices, which result in non-comprehension. It has also conducted orientation/ training programmes for teachers and educational functionaries concerned with the education of SC/ST children. It has also set up 21 Focus Groups to look into all aspects of education.

The Focus Group on Problems of SC/ST children has been set up under the chairpersonship of Dr. Padma Velaskar of Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai. This Focus Group has presented a tentative draft, containing recommendations on equitable provision in terms of availability of schooling at different levels of education, adequacy of educational infrastructure, teaching learning material, etc. It emphasizes critical thinking, social and emotional development, creative and productive skills, dignity of labour underlined by values of equality, social justice, etc. The National Curriculam Framework for School Education (NCFSE), which is presently under review by the NCERT will give due weightage on all these aspects at the time of its finalization.